

THE WAY

T O

PEACE,

By the Proposal of some

CONSIDERATIONS

ARGUING THE

NECESSITY

O F

MUTUAL LOVE;

A N D

FORBEARANCE in many THINGS,

To Effect It.



L O N D O N,

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T O T H E R E A D E R.

R E A D E R,

THIS Discourse, though it may serve for any Meridian of the Christian World, yet is it more particularly calculated for this Famous City, to which as a Native and Member I am related; and in whose Peace and Prosperity my own is involved. The occasion that moved me to these Considerations, was what escapes few Mens notice and complaints; viz. our Indecent Expressions and Rough Deportment toward each other upon our different Senses and Judgment of Affairs, wherein we are all concerned that they be managed aright; and in Charity are to believe no less is intended by most. The Design of their Publication, is to direct our misguided Zeal, to allay our violent Heats, to correct our sharp and acrimonious Humours, to sweeten our Tempers and Dispositions, and make us better natur'd to one another. That Cause which bath Truth and Righteousness for its Foundations, cannot stand in need of any ill Art to support it; Clamors or Forgeries, passionate Transports, or malicious Insinuations, can do little Service to any Cause, and least of all to the Best: by good Will and good Reason, by Calmness of Temper and force of Argument, when in Conjunction, much may be effected, but if disunited, as good as nothing. The Matters whereabout our general Disagreement is, would not be fatally prejudicial to our selves or others, neither impeach our present or future happiness, did not our Indiscretion in their management, bring in a train of mischievous consequences. The Epidemical Errors in the Nation are not of a malignant Nature, nor have they seiz'd the Vitals of Religion; I pray God we apply not Remedies worse than the Disease. Because we differ from one another with Pride, Self-will, Envy, Affectation, Malice, Passion, 'tis no wonder that from these Roots of Bitterness, spring forth those sower Fruits of Slanders, Detraction, Lying, Libelling, Aspersions, Calumnies, Execrations, Perjuries, which are the Pest and Scandals of our Age and Nation. It ill becomes a Member of any Church that acknowledgeth Jesus Christ the Head, to be of a Temper and Disposition repugnant unto his, to act and be in any other Spirit then that of Love and Tenderness, Ingenuity, and Compassion, Good-will and Beneficence, Universal Charity and Righteousness, these give the Essential Form and Genuine Complexion to a Christian. By these Vertues we imitate him whom we worship, and honour our Redeemer: To whose Law of Love if we yield Obedience, 'twill make us better Subjects and Citizens, better Friends and Men than now we generally are: for an entire Submission and Conformity to this Royal Law, makes a good Christian, and that a Person so in all Conditions and relations

T. F.

The Way to Peace

By some Moderate and Healing
PRINCIPLES, PROPOSALS, and DIRECTIONS

Humbly offered to the Consideration of all

CHRISTIANS,

As a MEANS to make us of that
PURE and PEACEABLE RELIGION
We make Profession of.

By one that desires to be called only by that Holy Name of

CHRISTIAN.



IN all matters wherein we dissent from others, as there are many Cases both Civil and Religious, which are of a doubtful Nature, and Arguments on both sides are near an *Equilibrium*, and we cannot bring the Affair to an Issue, to the plenary satisfaction of both parties, whilst we find those that be otherwise minded then we are, to be for the main discreet and virtuous, and have no apparent reason to distrust that they intend other then Peace and Right, we ought to be very fair and candid in the interpretation of their differing from us, and make as favourable Allowances as the nature of the thing will admit.

No Man that will retire a while and use his thoughts in calm and impartial Considerations, but may easily perceive there is no reasonable account to be given, wherefore he should be displeased and angry with a person that hath different apprehensions and notions from himself; for by the Law of Retaliation, the other may pay him in the same Coin, and measure to him again the same he meted to him before; because just so far as the one differs from the other, that other differs from him: surely then that fair quarter and ingenuous Constructions, I reckon due to my self from anothers hand, I cannot without manifest Injustice and Violation of the Law of Charity, refuse to allow to him.

He that is enamoured of Truth and Righteousness for their own sake, and loves them for their innate worth and beauty, and undertakes their defence and patronage, upon no mean and sinister Motives and Inducements, but with an honest design to promote and vindicate the same, will be circumspect and cautious to manage all his Overtures in order thereunto with that gravity, moderation, seriousness, and strength of Argument, that it may appear he endeavours rather to convince his Opponent by Rational Demonstrations, then vex and exasperate him by Railleries and Invectives.

Where the proper means of Conviction, *Viz.* Rational and Moderate Arguing, will not take place and prevail with him that is of a different Notion and Apprehension from us, our violent and boisterous passions are useless and insignificant; the acting and speaking as if we were transported beyond, or were beside our selves, is a very preposterous way to bring others to a right understanding; 'tis not the strength of our Passions but our Reasons, that can make our Opinions currant and acceptable unto others.

All those errors and mistakes which are imputable to the weakness and imperfection of Humane Understanding (which was when at best, Finite and Fallible) and do not derive a Poyson and Malignity from the Will, is the onely Source and Original of Moral Evil, have in the judgment of the Wiser sort of Men made us rather Patients then Criminals, and justly challenge the Compassion and Counsel of a Physician to advise and recover, and not the severity and Sentence of a Judge, to Condemn and Execute; it being more Humane and Christian to deliver a Mistaken-man from his Errors, then to pass judgment on him for them.

The pouring out of our own Blood as a Sacrifice to Truth and Righteousness, if the Providence of God require it, is in it self a more noble and heroick Action, as also a more acceptable and grateful Offering to our Redeemer, who was himself an Instructor, and Instance of so generous Love and Vertue, then the violent shedding of theirs, that contradict and oppose the same.

At what a low Ebb is the Divine Life, and with what compassionate Resentments ought we to look on the State of Christianity in the World, when we behold those that profess a Religion, wherein is recommended to them by the most Endearing Motives, Patience, Meekness, Humility, Charity, Peaceableness, and mutual forbearing and forgiving one another, and all other Vertues and Graces, which may render Humane Conversation, Universally Delightful, and Beneficial; they should as it were in despite of all those obliging Arguments the Gospel presents them with, to live in the practice of these Divine and Inoffensive Vertues, be guilty of as horrid Cruelty and Burchery, Envy and Malice, Revenge and Uncharitableness, towards one another, and that under the pretence of Zeal for this Peaceable and Holy Institution, as the Pagan World can be charged with in their open Wars and Hostilities: Strange and Preposterous Zeal, to play the Devil (as they say) for Gods-sake, and out of love to Religion, draw out its Vital Spirits, to raise and subvert these indispensable and fundamental Duties of Benignity, Clemency, and universal Good-will, abstract from which, Religion would be no more to us, then an empty name, and fruitless Speculation, and signifie nothing either to the Honour of God, or Happiness of Man. Unhappy Christendom, how art thou degenerated from thy Primitive Purity, Love and Humility, where are the Characters and Impressions by which onely it can appear we belong to Christ? Doth not the Image and Superscription we generally bear, Argue we do indeed and in truth call another Lord and King.

Would we divest our selves of our Passions and Prejudices against those Persons or Parties whose Opinions and Sentiments we are in opposition to, and not engage our private Humours and Interests in our Contentions, nor permit our personal and particular designs to bias and influence our Motions, the controverting and debating the most material points depending in dispute among us, would be a pleasant and advantageous Theme, and contribute greatly to the improvement of our judgment and understanding, without any diminution of mutual Good-will and Charity.

In this present condition of Weakness and Ignorance, wherein none can plead Exemption from mistakes, and every man that doth not sit in the Infallible Chair, must own he is out and at a loss some where; being subject to the same Passions, and liable to the like Misprissions as others; what is more decorous and becoming those that are under the same Circumstances of a frail and wandring State, than to compassionate each others Lapses and Misapprehensions than modestly to distrust their own Sentiments, than diligently to inquire for further Information, than to attempt others recovery by rational Conviction, and not too morosely to censure, not jocosly to sport themselves with the Ignorances and Infirmities of Humanity.

Those whom we have reason to believe from the constant Tenour of their Actions principally design God and Goodness, although their doubtful Notions concerning some revealed and yet abstruse Truths, hinder them from assenting and consenting to a Form of Words as rigidly true, which by some Ecclesiastical Determinations and Civil Sanctions, are made the *Shibboleth* to try the Orthodox by, yet if they have so much Faith in God through his Son, as to be unto them a Principle of Divine Love and Obedience, their peaceable Dissent and inoffensive Conversation, should incline us rather to treat them B benignly and Humanely, than their mistaken Opinions move us to choller and uncharitable usage.

If once we establish this as a Principle that Religion may be forced, there will be no measure nor end of violence and cruelty; for then in whose hands soever the Sovereign Power resides, the Parasites of it will be insinuating that it is as Orthodox, as 'tis supream; and under the notion of extirpating Heresie, preserving Decency, promoting Unity, securing the Power of Holy Church, being secure against its Usurpations, or some plausible Pretensions or others, as are most suitable to advance their Ambitious Projects, the Liberties, the Properties, the Lives of Innocent and Moral Men shall be sacrificed upon the fore-mentioned Principle; and the refusal perhaps of Subscription to the most unreasonable Propositions, be adjudged a Capital Offence, and nothing less than life it self allowed to be an Expiation for it.

Is it not sad enough for a man fatally to mistake in the things of his everlasting Peace, and to err at his own Eternal Peril; but must we endeavour to hurry him to the place of torment before his time, and precipitate him before his natural life expire, with all his mistakes and errors about him, into the Infernal Pit: If his case be compassionate, which slays a man by chance, and he find favour from the Law, shall we not much more commiserate his condition, that through want of skill and judgment mistakes the way to his own happiness, and falls into what is call'd Heresie or Fundamental Error, when he is very careful and industrious to decline it.

It ill becomes Christians to propagate Religion by the Artifices and Methods of *Mahumetans*, it argues they know not what manner of spirit their Saviour was of, that went about doing good, and always Acted in a Spirit of Meekness and Humility, and recommended the same temper and disposition to his Disciples; that attempt the Dissemination of his Doctrine by means so contrary to those by which it was first planted in the World; our Lord hath promised to be always with his faithful Servants in the discharge of their Duty, and that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against his Church: but this is not accomplished by humane might and power, but by his Spirit, whereby is given them a Mouth and Wisdom, which none of the Adversaries of Truth shall be able to resist.

Confiscations, Exiles, Interdicts, Inquisitions, &c. were strange things in the primitive times of Christianity. He that died for us, gave us no commission to make way for our Religion by force of Arms, the commandment which we had from the beginning was not so: This is the Evangelical Doctrine, in Meekness to Instruct, Exhort, Persuade, Rebuke, and Beseech. And if these means did fail of their Convincing and Converting Men to the Faith, and they did persist in their Errors, Maugre all the Arguments were offer'd to their minds, to procure their belief of the Gospel, against their Perverseness and Obstinacy to entertain Divine Truth: Christ that would have all his Souldiers Volunteers, provided not any Violent and External Remedies; they that refused, did it with the hazzard of their Souls, and the Messengers had nothing further in Commission when their Doctrine was slighted and despised, then to shake off the dust from their feet, as a Testimony against those which rejected the Counsel of God against themselves. What kindness can Men have for that Religion, whose Laws are writ with the point of a Sword, and whose Addresses to them are in blood and cruelty, which quits the proper *Media*, by which rational Creatures are prevail'd with, viz. Reasons and Arguments, and in lieu of satisfying the judgment and understanding of the truth of its Propositions by conclusive demonstrations, exacts an implicit belief of them and a blind obedience to them, under the severest Penalties Tyranny can contrive.

Whoever pretends to an Authority over the Religion and Consciences of Men, and in subserviency to their Salvation, to invade and destroy the Civil Rights and Properties of those of the same common Family of God with themselves, ought to show a very plain and authentique Warrant by which such power is delegated to them, and that they are constituted by the Supream Lord to be his Vicars and Substitutes, to demand and recover in his Name the Forfeitures that Infidels and Hereticks make of all their Temporal Felicity, by their unhappy ignorance of the way to Eternal. However men manage and ventilate the Proposition, That dominion is founded in grace, yet when it comes to be reduced to practice, they are not willing it should pass for truth any longer then the power continues in their own hands, and they are able to improve it to particular advantage.

The fancying that our differing Opinions concerning some difficult Supernatural Truths, and some External Modes of Divine Worship, makes us of a different Religion from one another,

other, and excludes them that are mistaken from the benefits of the Covenant and the favour of God, as much as it doth from ours, hath been and is one of the most pernicious and destructive Engins by which the peace and happiness of the Christian Churches hath been undermined; which can never be secured so long as we account such persons Enemies to God and Goodness, whose belief and practice thwarts ours; the necessary and fatal consequence of which, will be rigid Censures, and bearing hard upon each other, in Unchristian and Inhumane Practices.

I wish that great Truth which at last God reveal'd to his Apostle, was the common Faith of all Christians, *Viz.* That God is no respecter of Persons, that he hath no special regard to any particular Parties and distinct Societies of Man, to do for them as being under a peculiar Denomination, more then for others; let their profession be never so fair and specious, but that in every Nation, in every party, those that fear God and work Righteousness, and those only shall be accepted: 'Tis in vain to expect any Zeal or earnest Contention to defend or destroy any of the Rituals and Outworks of Religion, will be of an advantage to us: whilst we neglect those indisputable and indispensable Duties, we cannot but know our Obligations to.

None of our contests for Truth and Religion should make us abandon those mild and benign Vertues, which are the glory and perfection of it; and when we differ concerning such parts of Christian Faith, which they are not assented to, do not render the Gospel ineffectual to attain those great ends whereunto it is design'd; if after men have fairly propos'd the Arguments that oblige them to yield their Assent, and moderately heard the Allegations that are offer'd by those of a contrary persuasion, both do remain of their former judgment without satisfaction from each other, 'tis most reasonable that they part as good friends, and upon as fair terms as they met, and innocently continue their differing Sentiments.

Few men I doubt give themselves the trouble of a fair and diligent Examination and Enquiry into the Articles of their Belief, but either to save themselves the labour of a search, take up their Creed by whole sale; or for fear of the Event being hazardous, by finding upon the trial that the true belief is punishable or unfashionable, resolve to continue in and promote the Religion in which they are Educated, though they are not able to render any account either to themselves or others, wherefore they embrace such Opinions which are handed down to them; then those Arguments which equally serve for all Religions alike, and therefore ought not to be used for the goodness or truth of any.

No Religion, but 'tis too good to be the Subject of Plays and Farces, and turned into Ridicule and Burlesque. In so Profligate and Atheistical an Age, 'tis the common concern of all that have Reverence for Deity, and regard to its Revelation, though they differ in the Explication of several parts and passages of it, to keep up the honour of Religion in the main, by discountenancing that drolling humour, which under pretence of being Satyrical against Hypocrites, doth frequently encroach upon true Piety, and doth by mistake, at least, to say no worse, wound a Friend instead of an Enemy.

An exact Agreement and Correspondence in all matters, is so far from being absolutely necessary to the happiness of Humane Nature, that 'tis not Essential in the judgment of the Learned, to the Bliss even of the Angels, of whose disagreement in some particulars we have a probable Account in the History of *Daniel*, though there is no reason to believe it impair'd their Felicity.

Different apprehensions, of things discreetly and moderately managed, renders converse more delightful, and our company more acceptable to each other, then it can be where we all know and own the same Notion, and all our parts are of the same measure and proportion.

The Bill of Contention is kept up, by an hasty and precipitate rejecting other Mens Sense and Proposals, and by an over-eager and impatient pressing of our own; as if what was tendered to us by our Antagonist, was not worthy Regard and Consideration, and what we offer'd ought to be credited without inquiry and rational satisfaction. Were this positive humour banished out of our common Discourses, together with it we should be quit of most of that inflameable matter which keeps the fire of passion and anger, like that of Hell, from going out and ever being extinct.

If we enquire after the *Coercive Power* of the Civil Magistrate in *Matters of Religion*, and what is the *Adequate Object* thereof, among those who know that it will be employed for *their Interest*, they are for making broad its *Phylacteries*, and enlarging its exercise and jurisdiction, at least to the utmost of its extent. If we consult others, whose *Temporal Concernments* are subject to be prejudiced by the *Penalties* the Law imposeth on Dissenters, they urge, that whilst they *Worship God* in the way which he *prescribeth*, in a quiet and peaceable manner, no *Humane Power* ought to disturb and interrupt them, but to grant them its protection, and provide for their security; but be this as it will, 'tis with me an undoubted *Maxime*; Let the power wherewith the *Magistrate* is vested, be never so absolute, 'tis given him for the *Edification* and Benefit, and not the *Destruction* of his Subjects, and that the condition of Modest, Humble, Meek, Peaceable, and innocent Persons, should be rather better than worse by the Civil Magistrates being of the Christian Religion; and that even they themselves are not exempted from the Divine commands of Moderation, Lenity, Compassion, Condescension, Charity, &c. but that these Vertues, so far as the *Publick welfare* can be preserv'd, ought to be the *Principal Ingredients* in all their Laws and Constitutions.

We that are of the Protestant Profession, at this time especially ought to remember upon what Principles and Motives we forsook the Romish Communion; the more firmly to unite us in mutual love, under our smaller differences: Some of the Principles, which may be as a foundation to this Union, are: 'That the holy Scriptures contain in them whatsoever is *necessary* to Christian Faith and Manners; That it is a *Duty* incumbent upon *All* to read, to search, and endeavour to find out the sense and meaning of them, and to behave themselves answerably; That whosoever firmly believes the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and in *the gross* all the Truths are comprized in them, though he should mistake in some particular Truths, his Errors will not, whilst he is *invincibly and not wilfully ignorant*, prove damnable to him; all that God requires of us in order to our Salvation, being a *sincere and serious endeavour* to know and do his will, and not that we be *impeccable or infallible* in this mortal state: That they onely err to their eternal ruin, which oppose such Truths they know God hath testified; That God hath made nothing *absolutely necessary* to Salvation, which is not *plainly revealed*; That no Church of any particular denomination is *Infallible*, and that general Councils, Synods, Convocations, may, and have erred; That the imposing a Profession of known Errors, and practising known Corruptions, is a sufficient cause of Separation; That *publick* approbation makes it but *probable*, that the things they allow and command are good; That the opposing my Reason and *Authority of Scripture* against the *Publick*, is not the opposing my *Judgment* against it, but that of *God* to that of *Man*; That every man ought to judge for himself, which Religion is truest; That the Bible is the Religion of Protestants, and nothing but that and the plain consequences thereof, can they with *consistency* to their own grounds either *believe* themselves, or *require* of others; That none ought to take up Truth upon the credit of any, without asking the reason why; That he that endeavours to believe Scripture in the true sense, cannot be an Heretick; and that it were well if no more than what is *Evident* in Scripture was required to the Churches Communion; That the *Rule* to judge Controversies by, is the *Scripture*, and that no *one Man*, or any company of Men, are appointed to judge for the rest. These and many other Positions of the same importance are to be had in the writings of our greatest and wisest Protestants, which if we would diligently improve into practice, would be of excellent use to sweeten our Tempers towards one another, and abate those Animosities, Feuds, and malicious Dissentions, which are the shame and scandal, and if Heaven prevent not, may be the ruin and destruction of our Nation and Religion.

Love is a Vertue so *Amiable*, that it is *Universally* spoken well of, and those that are *sparing* of it to others, desire it may be *liberally* expressed to themselves; in the opposite Vices of Malice, Envy, Revenge, &c. consist not only the *Essence* of the punishment of the next World, but the *foundation* of most of the Calamities of *this*: Where this *Divine Grace* with its *Concomitant* Vertues have their Residence, there the mind of a man is calm and serene, at great *ease in it self*, and no way injurious or offensive unto any; but heartily desirous that the *whole World* might conspire in *one common design* of promoting each others good and wellfare, and doth not stingily and penuriously limit, and confine its desires and endeavours, to provide for any *particular Self* or *Party* of Men so great and plentiful a portion, (nay not his own if he be of any) that the rest should *suffer* the worse for it; and did this

Spirit of Universal love obtain more generally among men, what a strange alteration should we behold in the World, the *Golden Age* would spring up in an instant, *Tigers* and *Wolves* would quit their *Savageness* and *Cruelty*, the *lost Paradise* be restored, and in the Prophe- tick Phrase, *Instead of the Thorn should come up the Furr, and instead of the Brier the Myrtle*; the *Wolf* would dwell with the *Lamb*, and the *Leopard* lie down with the *Kid*, and the *Child* play on the *hole of the Asse*, &c. then those black and *Hellish Passions* which ferment and fret the Spirits of Men, and render them as vexatious and uneasy to themselves, as trouble- some and unpleasant to those they are concerned with, would be conjured down to that place of darkness from which they first sprung, together with that train of mischiefs and plagues which they scatter and diffuse among men.

The great design of Gods sending his Son into the World, was not to amuse our under- standing, with the proposing to them *abstruse* and *mysterious* Truths, or to persuade us to yield an Assent to Doctrines knotty and incomprehensible, to believe, as some teach, both against sense and reason, to gaze upon, and admire not the brightness and lustre, but the darkness and obscurity of *Divine Revelation*; these must needs be ends below so merciful and indulgent a Father, and *Inadequate* to so great an undertaking as was that of the Redeemer, whose Principal Intention, upon the *Propitiation* made for the sin of the world by the *Sacrifice* of himself, was to direct mankind to the Practice of the most *Generous* and *Godlike Vertues*, and make them partakers of a *Divine Nature*; to recover them from sensuality and malignity, and from all filthiness of *Flesh and Spirit*, to teach them to deny *Ungodliness* and *Worldly Lusts*, and to live *Soberly, Righteously, and Godly*; to have their Con- versations *Honest and Orthodox*, and not to conform themselves to the guise and fashion of the degenerate World; and to encourage them, not so much to believe, as do and suffer hard and difficult things, by the expectation of a blessed Immortality at his glorious ap- pearance and his Kingdome.

The Divisions of the Christian Churches will scarce ever be abated, till the numerous *Ar- ticles* which are made necessary terms of Communion, be lessened, and the more subtil and nice ones, be accounted as Ecclesiastical determinations ought to be; probable and valua- ble, but not indubitable and conclusive. He whose Faith and Hope is in God through Je- sus Christ, and makes his Applications and Addresses unto the Father in the Name and through the Mediation and Intercession of the Son of God, which are the Foundations of Christian Religion, as it differs from the *Mosaic* and *Natural*, and is ready to assent to all Articles of Christianity, which in express words are delivered in the Divine Writings, which are suppos'd to be the fittest, because the Holy Spirit Dictated them, who knew best in what Language those great Mysteries could be best communicated to our Understand- ings, is a Christian in the Gospel sense. 'Tis certain that in matters of pure Revela- tion, 'tis somewhat daring to be wise about what is writ, to deviate from that Form of sound words is of Divine Inspiration, and to make our Comments and Deductions equally Authentick with the Original, for all Inferences from Scripture, so far as they are but Hu- mane, are Fallible, and therefore can no further demand our Assent than they

* *Jo. Smith* satisfy our Judgment. * Thus a learned Author of our own, in his discourse of Prophecie, 'We must not think we can vary Scripture Expressions security, with retaining the true meaning, except we likewise had as real an understanding of the sense it self as the Inspired Persons had, over whom God did so far super-intend in copying forth his Truth, as not to suffer them to swerve from his meaning.

The greater progress we make in Love, by which I understand not a single Passion, but a System and Constellation wherein are conspicuous the most eminent Vertues, the further profi- ciency we make in the Doctrine of the Gospel, whose very Air and Complexion is little else but Love, the nearer approaches also we make to that great Pattern and Example of our Sa- viour, whose Steps we are obliged to tread in, and to walk in those Paths of Love he trod in before us, whose will also it is that we transcribe and copy it out in our Conversation; this is that Peculiar Character, by which Christs Disciples are to be discriminate from the followers of any other Master, and by which his Church may be known from all other Churches: 'Tis observable, that though among all the signs of the true Church, Bellur- mine omits this of Love, yet that all Faith is not a more certain sign of the True Church, than want of Love is a sign of the false; and the same is applicable to the particular Mem- bers. Where-ever I find a body of Men, let them Christen themselves with as glorious a Name as they please, though they monopolize Salvation to themselves, and exclude out of Heaven

Heaven as many as are out of *their Communion*. If I perceive among them bloody and destructive Principles, savage and violent Actions, boisterous and ungovernable Passions, poysonous and virulent Humours, hellish Designs and Contrivances, to involve the Peaceable and Innocent in blood and destruction; or if they do not boyl up to this height of *overt cruelty* in Actions of a *Sanguine Complexion*, yet if there be found among them a more *Spiritual* and *Subtle Malignity*; a more sly and ingenious Artifice to spread an *Infection* upon the Credit and *Reputation* of their Neighbours (that are not squar'd *exactly* by the *Rules* from which they take their *measures* of Truth and Error) by Calumnies and Reproaches, by sower Cenforiousness, by malicious Detractions, by false or railing Accusations, &c. I must take leave of both these kinds in the language of *Jacob* concerning his Two cruel Sons *Simeon* and *Levi*: *O my soul come thou not into their secret; unto their Assembly my Honour be not thou united*. No profession, though never so *plausible*, no *Opinions*, be they never so *right*, can in his judgment who knows what is the difference between *true Religion* and a *Pharisaick Righteousness*, be valued any further then they subserve to the Honour and Glory of God on High in promoting Justice and Temperance, an Heavenly Frame of Mind, a Benign and Charitable Disposition and Inclinations to Peace, and Good-will towards all Men.

'Tis to be suspected they have made but a *superficial* search, and studied onely the Arguments of *one side*, and often neither, in most of our present Controversies, that are most *dogmatical* and confident; and though it be granted that they are sometime on the *side of truth*, yet their Orthodox Notions are not truly *their own*, nor Vertuous and Praise worthy, because they are not the *result* of a diligent and impartial Enquiry, and an assent unto Truth upon *satisfactory* Evidence offer'd to their judgment after an *Examination* of such Arguments as are propos'd by the contrary party, which always ought to be thrown into the Scale and *carefully weigh'd*, before we come to a *positive determination* in matters which we would *impose* upon others Judgment and Practice; but even their right opinions are to be attributed rather to such external occasions which leave them short of *Rational Truths*, and unbecoming intellectual Agents indued with faculties to search after Truth, as their *fortunate Nativity* where the *right* belief was profess'd, or *Prepossession* from the Principles instill'd in their Education, or *incompetency* of parts, to make a through scrutiny, or *readiness* to comply with *Persons*, they esteem, care to preserve their *worldly Interest*, or an *indifferency* whether Religion be true or false, and other accidental motives in conjunction with these, which would have made even these sort of men, had the *contrary Tenets* been offer'd to them at first on the same advantage, been as valiant Champions in the defence of *Error* as now they chance to be of *Truth*; it being not their *integrity* and *ingenuity* and unbiass'd prosecution of Gods will, which gives them *Preeminence* above others, for in these they often *fall short* of their mistaken Brethren, whose *modest Enquiries* into the truth of some *received Opinions*, may sometime minister matter for suspension of belief, and dissatisfaction in those Notions, which these weak and inconsiderate men do more *readily* assent to, and *positively* assert, because they have not acquainted themselves with those *Rational Exceptions* and real difficulties, which others find they are liable to, and intangled withal, which have made a more *narrow* Search and more diligent *Scrutiny* into them.

That we may the better maintain peace and an amicable correspondence with those which dissent from us, we should remember, that in this *state* all men are abnoxious both to Error and to Sin, and *imperfect* both in *knowledge* and *virtue*; that we ought to put on all mens actions the most *favourable construction* their circumstances will admit; that we our selves have at some turns *fail'd* as well as our Neighbour; that to take the Chair and Judge in Cases where we are *parties* and concern'd, is the highest injustice; that no man ought to be charged with maintaining the ill *Consequences* of his Opinions, when he doth deny and *disclaim* them; that *Moral Integrity* recommends a mistaken man to God, that though he hath provided no *Infallible* preservatives from Errors, yet sincere care to avoid them is an *effectual* Antidote against their *Poyson*; and that 'tis *unreasonable* for us to treat men as *Enemies* for such Opinions by which they do not *forfeit* Gods love and favour. That, in fine, What God principally values and requires, is, that Men *sacrifice* their *Hearts* and *Affections* to him, and yield to him *formal* and *virtual* Faith and Obedience, when they fail through want of sufficient Information of *Material*; and that if these be the terms whereupon God will graciously accept his *weak* and *impotent* Creatures, then we ought not to *Reprobate* and *Anathematize* them whom God receives, though they *subscribe*

not

not to all those Articles we have annexed to *our Creed*, and made *fundamental* to *Salvation*.

He which neglects not the *means* appointed by Heaven to *inform* him of Truth, but being divested of all *worldly respects* and secret inclinations, that *one* proposition should be *true* rather than the other, that stands *ready* to believe, and *resolv'd* to obey the Will of God as soon as it *appears* to him to be *his*; and as an *upright Judge* with *Caution* and *Impartiality*, examines what ever can be alledged to give in Evidence to the Matter he is in quest of; and as an *Honest Christian*, to his Care and Diligence, superadds his Humble and *Hearty Prayers* to the Father of Lights for the Divine Influences, and *Concurrence* of the Spirit of Truth, for his *Guidance* and *Direction*: What ever Error such a Man may hold, what ever Truth he may be unacquainted with upon such a *fair Enquiry*, his mistake and ignorance is *invincible*, and his case *compassionable*, and how he shall be dealt with at the Universal Audit, it cannot be *hard* for *them* to judge who partake most of the *Clemency*, *Benignity*, and *Love* of the *Father of Mercies*, who *remembers our Frame*, and *knows* that we *are but dust*, who will make all favourable *Allowances*, and will not upon the *forfeiture* of our *Eternal Happiness*, *exact* degrees of knowledge from us above the *Line* of the *Revelation* he hath made, and the *strength* of the *Faculties* we are indued with; and he that is *conscious* he hath made the *best use* of his Understanding he is able, in this *Intellectual Employment*, may as well *rejoyce* in the *Testimony* of his *Conscience*, though in some things he is mistaken, that he hath sought the Truth impartially, as he that hath had his *Conversation* in *Simplicity* and *Godly Sincerity*, may, notwithstanding some *Infirmities* and *Inadvertencies* he hath been subject to in his life.

Though we cannot but own that the *Reformation* both at *home* and *abroad* hath some *defects* and *blemishes*, and is not in all parts compleat and perfect, yet the *progress* that hath been made towards it, is a blessing ought to be highly valued, and thankfully acknowledged, and of all persons they ought not to *sleight* and *vilifie* it, and violently contest about indifferent things, whose *lives* are not *Reformed*, and scruple not at such things as are *undoubtedly* sinful; and on the other hand the *Patronage* and *defence* of it is managed to very little purpose, when undertook by such who take liberty to *vary* from the *Rule of Right*, and live not according to the *exact* difference of Good and Evil, and conform not to that *Religion* established by the *Law* of our *Saviour*, and founded in the *Eternal Principles* of Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth. Nothing being more absurd and preposterous, childish and ridiculous, than to be *curiously busie* about the *Publick Reformation*, before the same work be done at *home*, nor a truer *Character* of an Hypocrite, than a *forward Zeal* to Correct and Amend the Faith and Religion of *others*, and yet allow himself in irregular and *dishonest Practices*; to *tithe the Mint, Anise and Cummin*, with great exactness and scrupulosity, and in the interim to neglect *Mercy, Judgment, Faithfulness*, and the *weightier* Matters of the Law.

These would be *happy Signs* of the Christian Churches recovery to a state of *steady Peace*, and be a spring of true joy to all that are *Friends to real Religion*, to see the *common Interest* and Design of Christianity prosecuted with as much diligence and industry as that of *particular parties*, to see our *private Picques* discarded, and every *good and vertuous Man* of whatsoever denomination (in our *New Stile*) accounted our Neighbour and treated accordingly, to see all our Controversies about *Superstition* wound upon this bottom, that none place *more or less Religion* in anything than the *nature* of the thing will bear, to see our *feaverish heats* about minute and petty Circumstances in Worship to *abate* and *grow cooler*, to see us so far as we have already attained to *walk by the same rule*, and *mind the same thing*; and wherein we are otherwise minded, not furiously attack and condemn one another; but humbly wait on him that hath promis'd that these things also wherein we differ he will reveal to us.

We are too prone to believe that the *Ark of God* will fall, unless we support it with *Unhallowed hands*, that *Christs Church* and *Faith* will be prevail'd on by the *Gates of Hell*, except we call for *fire from Heaven* to consume its Enemies; that *Heresies* or *Superstitions* will over-spread the Face of the Church, if we run not to an *Arm of Flesh* and take *Unchristian* and *Unwarrantable Methods* to suppress and prevent them; but let us contrive as many *expedients* as *Humane Wit* and *Power* can execute, to preserve the Church and Religion from *Rents* and *Divisions*, *Ruine* and *Destruction*, all our *Attempts* and *Remedies* are likely to prove *Ineffectual* and *Unsuccessful*, which are not founded in *rational Con-*
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viltion and Satisfaction, and recommended from a Spirit of Love, Sweetness, and Clemency.

Blessed Jesus! When thou comest wilt thou find Love in the Earth? Did ever any Professors of a Religion tread so *Antipodes* to the Example, and walk more contrary to the Precepts of their Master: It was not because thou wantedst Power but Will, that thou didst not revenge the Affronts and Injuries that were offer'd to thy Person and Doctrine: Couldst thou not have girded thy Sword upon thy Thigh, O thou most mighty, and rode on prosperously in the Ruin of thy Enemies, and triumphed over them in the greatness of thy Power? Hadst thou taught thy Disciples to fight, as Mahomet did his Disciples; and in lieu of that Meekness, Love, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, &c. which thou requirest as our Principal Tribute, enjoined us to be revenged on Enemies, to retaliate injuries, to make way for thy Gospel, by Rapine and Violence, by seizing the Properties, by Invading the Dominions of those we are able to prey upon. Hadst thou allowed us to violate our Faith, to quit our Allegiance, to Persecute, Torment, Massacre our Brethren to advance thy Kingdom and Power and Glory; then we might have beheld the Desolations those that profess thy Name have made in the World without astonishment, and owned they had not forfeited the Title they Assume of being of the Society of Jesus, by encouraging and propagating these and such barbarous Outrages; which have made good natured Hea-then afraid they should meet with them again in the other World.

In the Prophetick Vision, the Four great Monarchies of this World were represented by Beasts full of Savageness and Cruelty, as opposite to the Kingdom of the Messiah; the Glory and Establishment of which, was to consist in Love and Peace, in Righteousness and Joy, which although at present it obtain not to any great degree among Men, yet there are the Seeds of this blessed and happy Estate, scatter'd up and down in the Breasts of True Believers, and the Love of God and of his Off-spring is shed abroad in their hearts by his Spirit, to which the Administration of this Kingdom is committed, which like the stone cut out without hands, will increase by little and little, till it become a great Mountain and fill the whole Earth, as now it doth the Heavens, with its Glory.

What Peace can we hope for, so long as the several contending Parties with a kind of Hellish Sensuality care less and treat themselves with one anothers Wickedness and Immoralities, and are abundantly gratified, that the bounds of Temperance, Justice, and Chastity are transgressed, or any Villanies though never so hateful to God, Angels, and all Wise and Good Men, are perpetrated, provided that the Offenders be of a different persuasion from them; as if it were an eligible and grateful Spectacle to behold the Laws of Christ and the Honour of his Religion, rendred vile and contemptible to the World, that we may take occasion from thence, to insult and triumph over some we may stile our Enemies, and may have opportunity to revenge our private Grudges and Quarrels on the Criminals.

What Peace? So long as this most unjust and uncharitable Practice is kept on foot, whereby the Offences and Extravagancies of some particular Persons, are charged upon the whole Body or Corporation to which they do relate, and the guilt of what is done by one in compliance with his own Lusts and Passions, shall be imputed to the Party of which he is, as being the natural result of their Principles, which if it be countenanced, is the most compendious way not only to blist the credit and reputation of any small society of Men, but will bring the whole Christian Church under scandal and contempt; as if what Julian the Apostate said of it was true, That it was a Sanctuary to the most flagitious Offenders and patroniz'd those Vices to which no other Religion allowed Expiation.

What Peace can be so long? that hath not the practice and exercise of Godliness and Honesty for its Basis. Were all our differences among our selves compos'd to our mutual satisfaction, and no storms from abroad in view to threaten us. 'Tis too easie to prognosticate how short a continuance so great a blessing may make with us, if we cast our eyes upon those Vices and Debaucheries, which reign among us so uncontrouledly, which are the fatal symptoms and sad presages of approaching judgments. 'Tis not our Religious quarrels alone, are likely to Shipwreck our Nation, there are Vices and Villanies of a profaner hue, that increase the storm, and seem to render our preservation and escape, without Personal Reformation, impossible. Were we in earnest so solicitous for the Churches and Kingdoms Welfare, as we seem to be, and had the love for them we pretend, whilst we complain of the Methods and Arts others use to destroy it, we would be more careful

our selves that we did not *promote* its Ruin, and *pull down* its *Pillars* by our own *Immoralities*.

Salvation, is of such *Eternal Importance*, that no man ought to be *blam'd* for making *Inquiry* after the way to it, and for not taking it up on the *Credit* of another, who may for ought he knows deceive him, when he can be *sure* he hath no ill *Design* upon himself: 'Tis *Wisdoms* Direction that our own Eyes should look to the *Foundation* on which we stand, and that we should not commit our selves *blind-fold* to any ones *Direction*, let them pretend to never so *Infallible* Conduct. God hath set up a *Light* in every man; his *Reason* is the *Candle* of the Lord, and to follow it, and follow God, is in the *Old Theology* the same; and though this light be complain'd of as *dim*, yet it being the best we have since the *Fall*, 'tis our *security* to follow it, till we are furnished with a brighter; and if we chance to err by going along with our *best Friend* and *surest Guid*, our mistake will not be fatal, because it was not avoidable.

'Tis the Observation of a Person of Honour who hath used both *Sword* and *Shield* in the defence of our Reformation from the corrupt *Doctrines* of *Rome*, That the *Ecclesiastical*, who did not *absolutely believe*, and give up their Judgments to the *Doctrines* of any particular *Sect*, to be Swayed and Governed by their Principles and Determinations, but upon diligent and impartial examining their various and differing *Notions* and *Doctrines*, did reject what they found *dissimulant* from *Reason*, and elected and entertained for *Truth* what appeared to them to be agreeable thereto, were reputed a Discreet and Honest sort of *Philosophers*: So for Matters of Divinity there may be, and I doubt not but there is, a Good and Prudent kind of Christians, who do not *zealously* espouse and maintain the *Systems* and *Doctrines* of any of those *Distinct* Parties whereinto the Christian World is now Crumbled, but wherever they find the Truth, do *zealously* Embrace it, and joyn in some Truths with one Side and in some with another, and receiving the *Truth* in and for the *Love* of it, give it the preference before any other Persons or Interests whatsoever.

In these *Notions* I have rendred to thy thoughts, I am not alone, but have many of the *Primitive* Reformers of this Church, and of the *present* Worthy and Learned Members of it in my company, to whose Discourses and Labours I acknowledg my self indebted, which I ther ther mention to silence the Clamors and rectifie the mistakes of two sorts of men, who on different accounts impute more straitness and narrowness of Spirit to them, than in Justice they ought. Some few expressions of this tendency I shall recite: (a) 'Tis in vain to think Religion can be impos'd by force, that we can *bind the Wills* and Understandings of Men

(a) *Author of the whole Duty of Man in Cause of decays of Piety.* with such *fetters* as we do their *Bodies*: *Armies* cannot besiege my *Reason*, nor *Canons* batter my *Will*. The *Logick* of a *Sword* is not proper to induce Assent and Conviction: A Christian Persecutor is a contradiction; The *Gospel* in one hand, the *Sword* in the other, may make many

Slaves or *Hypocrites*, but few *Christians*. What motive can I have to receive Religion from an Oppressor, can I think that he that treats my *Body* Inhumanely hath a kindness for my *Soul*; that he that will not permit me to enjoy my own, will help me to any thing is better.

To these I subjoyn out of Dr. H. M. *Unity* of hearts is better then *Uniformity* in Actions indifferent: The visible exercise of professed *Charity* and kind Forbearance is a more comely *Ornament* of the Church than *constrained Uniformity*; *Opinions*, supposing no venome of a *Persecutive Spirit* in them, should not exclude from the Enjoyments either of publick or private Rights: External force being so unfitting in itself, and most of all *unbecoming* the Christian Magistrate in matters of Religion, what one may *fancy lost* by laying aside persecution, will be regained in as great a measure by Peace. Every one that professeth *faith* in *Christ* and believes the Scripture, let his *Opinions* be otherwise what they will, is according to his life worth ability to be preferred, which is absolutely the most *advantageous* way for the advancing the Gospel and making the *World good*, that the wit of man can find out: The *immediate Dictate* of Conscience in a Soul which is sincere is the *Command* of God, and the *Conviction* thereof is properly the *promulgation* of his Will: God sets a sincere Religionist free in matters of Religion from any external force or power. This Position, That *Liberty of Conscience* is not to be granted in Religion, is the the greatest *injury* and disinterest to True Religion can be supposed, and brings upon *Nations Wars*, *Bloodshed*, *Subversion of Families*, *Deposing Princes*, *Perpetual Enmity and Hatred*, and all the *Works* of the Kingdom of Darkness; The most truly Religious are most abhorrent from persecution for Conscience sake; To these I might add out of this profound Philosopher and Christian Doctor; Many more expressions of the same tenor and importance, were it not superfluous.

As a *Coronis* take these Propositions out of an Author of as great repute for Learning as most that have attempted to prove the Protestant Religion a Safe Way to Salvation. Mr. *Chill* Pag. 161.

They are the greatest *Schismatics* who make the way to Heaven narrower, the Yoke of Christ heavier, the Differences of Faith greater, the Conditions of Ecclesiastical Communion harder and stricter, than they were at first made by Christ and his Apostles. Allow the belief of no more difficulties necessary to Salvation now than were in the *Primitive* Church, that no Error is in self destructive which was not then: So order Gods Publick Service that plain and honest Christians may without hypocrisy, scruple, or protestation, against any part of it, joyn in it, then notwithstanding difference in things not plain, and therefore not necessary, there would be *Unity of Communion*, Charity and Mutual Tolleration, and by these means, Schisms and Heresies would be banished the World, and those wretched Divisions which rend and tear in pieces, not the Coat but the *Members* and *Bowels* of Christ, with mutual Pride, Tyranny, Killing, Cursing, and Damning, will receive a blessed *Catastrophe*.

Pag 177. The Presumptuous imposing the *Senses* of Men on the Word of God, and laying them on Mens *Consciences* equally, under Penalty of Death and Damnation; this vain conceit, that we can speak of the *Things* of God, better than in the *Words* of God, the restraining the Understandings of Men from that liberty wherein Christ left them, these make Schisms Immortal.

Take away Persecuting, &c. for not subscribing to the *Words* of Men as the *Words* of God, require of Christians onely to believe Christ, and to call no man Master but him onely: Take away Tyranny, restore Christians to their just and full liberty of Captivating their Understandings to Scripture onely, and 'tis to be hoped this will quickly reduce us to Truth and Unity.

I have learnt, saith he, from the Fathers, nothing is more against Religion than to force it; from St. Paul, that the *Weapons* of the Christians *Warsfare* are not *Carual*; and great Reason, for humane violence may make men counterfeite but not believe, and therefore fit only to breed *Form without*, and *Atheism within*: 'Tis unjust to force *Weak Men* by the Profession of a Religion they believe not, to lose Eternal Happiness, out of a fear they may possibly disturb the *States quiet*, by Opinions by which neither disobedience to Authority, or Impiety, is taught or licensed: They of all men are to be excepted from liberty, which teach this *Sanguinary Doctrine*, that 'tis lawful by *Humane Violence* to enforce others. If Protestants did compel others to embrace their Reformation, and offer violence to their *Consciences*, I excuse them not, and blessed had they been, had they chose rather to die for their Religion, than fight for it. This way of violence may perhaps produce Uniformity in a *Particular Church* or State, but immortalize the greater and more lamentable Divisions of Christendom, maintain perhaps the Profession of Truth in one place, and the Oppression in an hundred. Thus this great Man hath Writ, who was able by Reason and Scripture to maintain his Religion, and not obliged for want of Rational Arguments, to call for the Secular Sword to his Assistance.

I am aware that the *Temper of Mind* hereby recommended, is by many of a *Fiery* and *Active* Spirit decried, and interpreted to favour of too great a latitude, and to be that luke-warm and *Laodicean* Humour, which is so nauseous and hateful with our Lord; That *Truth* is to be prosecuted with our utmost Care and Intention of Mind, and that we cannot be too zealously affected in so good a Cause, but ought to express the greatest fervency therein. Although the Enquiry after Divine Truth and the Propagation of it, will justify our greatest Diligence and Activity, yet it will not account for any *Irregular* and *Indiscreet* Actions or Passions we shall fall into, in the defence and patronage of it; the greater Caution and Prudence is at this time necessary to do it real service, since it hath suffer'd so much prejudice from their forwardness and heat that have appear'd on its side. If I understand what it is to be Zealous for the Truth, 'tis not to be *Passionate* and *Litigious* about it, 'tis not to give our Natural Tempers, when hot and eager, the scope of expressing themselves warmly and contentiously for it; 'tis not to charge those that differ from us with *Heresie* or *Infidelity*, &c. He is the Man that hath a Love and Zeal for Truth, that carefully informs his mind concerning it, by Enquiry and Consideration, that improves it to moderate his Appetites and Passions, to refine and sweeten his Temper and Spirit, to Correct and Regulate his Life and Manners, to make his

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Converse *Beneficial to Men*, and Subservient to the Honour of the God of Truth.

The *Heresies* and *Errors* which the Apostles so smartly reprehended, and warned the Primitive Christians to avoid, were such that directly tended to the *Subverting Holiness* of Life, and foster'd Sensuality and Dissolution of Manners, and frustrated the gracious design of God in *Reconciling the World* to himself, by the Death and Resurrection of his Beloved Son, by turning the *Grace of God into lasciviousness*, making Christ the *Minister of Unrighteousness*, by taking encouragement to sin because Grace did abound, by abusing their liberty, to be *Servants of Corruption*. To these Notions and Practices, St. Peter gives the name of *Damnable Heresies*, and the *Errors of the Wicked*, and threatens those with fatal Destruction, and utterly perishing in their own Corruption, that so taught and practiced.

But when the Apostle hath occasion to Argue with *Weak and Honest* Christians which held the Head, and built on the true Foundation Jesus Christ, though they were Erroneous, and had Misapprehensions concerning the *Nature of Indifferent Things* and Truths of the *lesser Magnitude*, he doth not severely animadvert on them, nor was he willing to be positive and lay restraints on their liberty, that he might not, as he speaks, cast a Snare upon them, nor confine them where Christ had left them free; but gives them general Rules to observe; that Love and Peace might be maintained in the free use of their Christian Liberty, and that they might manage it so as that it become not a *stumbling Block* to them that were weak, as that they wounded not their brethrens weak consciences, by their imprudent exercise of it; and that they should not despise or judge one another, but that they ought to bear one anothers burdens, and not so much to please themselves, as every one to please his Neighbour for his good Edification.

'Tis not difficult to instance a great many Cases, where common Prudence and Ingenuity will make Allowances, if not Apologies for Erroneous Apprehensions, as where there are not evil consequences attend them, where there is no Malignity and Ill-will in conjunction with them, where the mistakes may result from the *Prejudices of Education*, or be founded in *Natural Temper* and Constitution, where there are no Indications of Pride and Affection, where the injury and dangers of his Errors will be to himself and not to other persons, where there have not been opportunities for better information, where men of known Integrity and Ability are of different Perswasions, where Expressions are Ambiguous and fairly capable of a two-fold signification, where to a particular mistake is superadded a general belief of the Truth, or compensation made by Uniform Obedience and Universal Charity, where the Censor hath great reason to suspect his own judgment, being compounded of the same frail and deceivable Materials as others are and is Obnoxious to the same, and possibly may be *Actually intangled* with greater Error than his, whom he animadverts upon: I am apt to believe that whosoever shall seriously attend unto these and such like Cases, for 'tis not possible to instance All, which challenge our Candour and good Construction, will not be rash and harsh in his condemning and censuring such, whose Notions and Tenets are not agreeable to his own.

If thy Brother judge not according to thy sense, what can that be to thee to move thy Spleen and Passion? Hath he not a Master of his own to stand or fall to, hath he not a Right to judge for himself as well as thou hast, and may he not use it without thy leave? Is not *Pr-meditation* necessary to make a wise choice and give true Judgment? Why then shouldst thou be impatient that he will not immediately accord with thy Apprehensions, but consider before he determine? May it not be Uncharitable to believe he hath not a fair Appearance of Truth and Show of Reason on his side, which lead him out of the way? And if it be so, 'tis most unreasonable to oblige him to alter his Opinions, till thou hast propos'd sufficient Evidence to his Understanding, that he may see a just cause so to do: for such is the frame and constitution of our *Humane Faculties*, that we cannot believe as we list, take up Notions, and admit them to credit at our will and pleasure, without the Evidence of Reason, nor quit and discharge our selves from them, when we are minded it should be otherwise, without Arguments and Rational Inducements.

There is an Evil incident to most, and the rather because few charge themselves with it in point of Conscience, *Viz.* an *Ease Credulity*, or *Over-hasty* taking up Ill Reports of Men without sufficient grounds; and then spreading them, and descanting on them as cer-
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tain and true, this now is not only *Prejudicial to Humane Converse*, as alienating Mens Affections from each other; and tending to the ruin of more perhaps then only a Mans good Name and Reputation, but must be of great concernment to our own Peace and satisfaction of Mind, if we have any *Modesty and Ingenuity* left; for if through this easiness of belief we are mistaken, and disperse the lie, what *Answer* can we give our selves, when we reflect on the scandalous Imputations and false Censures we have passed on an Innocent.

Prithee tell me what advantage thou lookest for, by being distinguished from others by *Ritual Observances*, by *ineffectual Opinions*, by *different Denominations*, by *External Formalities*, by a fondness for them, and for thy self too, that thou passest under a *Peculiar Character*, on that account, when in the mean time thy *Deportment and Conversation* is not distinguished from the rest of the World, but *favours of the same Earthly, sensual, Proud, Carnal, and Selfish Designs and Interests as theirs*. God is not so much beholding to Men as they vainly imagine, for their attempts to advance *that Kingdom which consists but in Meats and Drinks, and the like, and cometh with Observation*, and hath only an External Visible Pomp and Grandeur to set it off withal; and is at best Artificial and Mechanick. The Throne wherein he desires his *Empire and Dominion* should be established, is the *Heart and Soul of man*, and if that be not entirely subdued to the Divine Authority, and if *Universal Righteousness and Love* do not triumph there, all other *Formal Submissions and Professions* that are solemniz'd, do in earnest signifie nothing to the Honour of Gods Sovereignty, whose Kingdom doth not come with Power and Glory till his Will be done in Earth, as 'tis done in Heaven.

'Tis high time to take our Saviours Council to go home and learn, *Viz.* retire into our selves, and consider what this meaneth, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, that we may at length proportion the degrees of our Zeal and Affections to the true Nature and State of things, and no longer make such *Partial Preferences* as hitherto we have done, spending our main strength in the defence of the *Out-works*, whilst the chief *Citadel* through negligence falls into the Enemies hands; attending with great diligence to the *outward Forms and Mode of Religion*, while the *inward Life and Power* decays and languishes for want of due Provision. This *Over-valuation of Externals*, hath given a fatal check to the progress of True Religion in the World, and diverted the generality of Men from the prosecution of those *Divine and Excellent Virtues* wherein the very *Life and Spirit* of it consist, which are both of greatest concernment and benefit unto Men, and glory and honour unto God: for whilst they have *inverted Gods Order*, and *prefer'd Sacrifice before Mercy*, and put the *Means* in the place of the end, what God Instituted and Ordain'd to be *Subsidiary*, to promote Religion, hath been perverted and abused to *Obstruct and Impede* it.

True Religion consists in *Love, Holiness, Righteousness, Humility, Sincerity, Sobriety, Meekness*, and the like Divine Graces; and for Deficiency in these God makes no allowances; glorious things are spoken of these and all *Institutions of God*: much more *Inventions of Men*, when they come in *Competition* with them, are of little or no *Valuation*.

These are *Indispensably necessary and Essentially* requisite, to qualifie and dispose us for the enjoyment of God and Happiness; they are of a *Natural and Eternal Right*, Write by the Finger of God in the mind of Man, in the first moment of his Creation; these make us conformable to our Creator, like to our Father, renew his Image in us, and make us according to our Measure and Proportion *partakers of the Divine Nature*. These render us acceptable to God, and restore us to his Favour; they are the true *Ennoblements and Embellishments of the Soul*, they have not an *Arbitrary Goodness* depending onely on the resolution of the *Divine Will*, but an *Inherent and Intrinsic Excellency Essential* to them. All *Instituted Worship* is appointed to Minister to these, the design of our Lords undertaking was to promote them, the Treasures of his Kingdom are promis'd to them, our own and others Peace is settled and preserv'd by them, and against these there is no Law no Objections. He that in these great things of Religion *serveth Christ*, will be acceptable to God and approved of all Wise and Good men.

These challenge our most earnest Zeal and Intention, our greatest Fervency and Activity, our constant care and diligence; but alas we take it to be too heavy a burden to charge our selves with these weighty things of the Law and Gospel, and therefore that we may the more quietly ease our selves of them with as few rebukes from our Consciences as we can, we create refuges of lies, to which we repair for shelter against their Importunities and Convictions, to which Sanctuaries not only the more Demure and Pharisaick, but the Publican and Profaner Sinners do resort; and as a Supplement to their defects in Morals, and Compensation for Vicious Practices, expect to render God Propitious to them by some modes of Devotion, some scheme of Opinions, some

Forms of Godliness, some Sanctimonious shews, by Communion with the Church, by frequenting Ordinances, by Zeal against others Sins and Errors, by Acting some single Virtue, by abhorring some single Vice, by passionate Contests for Publick Usages, or *Particular* Perswasions, by bearing hard upon those that dissent from them, either by *Censure* or *Power*, and by believing thereby they do God good service; some one or other of these or the like formal *Artifices*, or else some more *Spiritual* and Refined Pieces of Hypocrisie, consistent with the Lusts and Passions and Interests of Men, have almost banished out of the World that Religion which is Pure, Peaceable, Gentle, easie to be Intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisie, and made us forget there is a Text in the Bible dehorts us from all Bitterness and Wrath and Anger, and Glamour, and Evil-speaking, with all Malice; and though we may flatter our selves with a conceit, that these Vices with others of the same kinds may be *Con- nio'd* at and *dispens'd* with, when they are turn'd against the Enemies of God, and his Church, State, or People, yet such is their Natural Malignity, and Turpitude, that they cannot be *Sancti- f'd* and Authoris'd by any Power or Prerogative in Heaven or Earth.

Those that would be *Dictators* in Religious Affairs, and *Umpire* in Matters of Conscience, if they design to bring it to a good Issue, ought to be themselves very unblameable in their lives, and do those things may gain a belief that God will not refuse to have familiarity with them, and acquaint them with his Will. What Credit can be given to their Report of God, that are Enemies to him in their Minds by Wicked Works? Who can look for a true Character of God, from one that bears not his Image? For right Notions of him and his ways from one that is a stranger to both? Truth is most likely to be found in Conjunction with Goodness. Wickedness Corrupts and Vitiates the Principles of the Mind; the Faculties, by which Men should make Right Judgment of Religion, are deprav'd by Pride and Lust. Where these are Predominant in the Lives and Actions of Men, we may justly suspect their Acquaintance with Divine Truth, and their Ability to Conduct and Guide others thereinto. Did his Holiness, so call'd, really deserve that Name, so arrogantly assumed and attributed, I should not wonder that he was Consulted as an Oracle. The *Urim* and *Thummim* were united. Till the soul be hallow'd and purified from corrupt Passions and terrene Affections, the Spirit of Truth will not vouchsafe to enlighten it. In Heaven, where there are the fullest Communications of Goodness, there are the clearest and brightest Manifestations of Truth.

Truth is most likely to be found where the Author of it was, nor in the strong Wind, nor in the Earthquake, nor in the Fire; nor in minds furiously Agitated with their own Passions and Appetites, but in the still small voice; in those of a Sedate, Calm, Benign, Quiet, and composed Temper: Truth and Love are naturally allied, and seldom part company, he that treads the Paths of Love and Peace, doth rarely err from the way of Truth. He of whom 'tis said he is Light, 'tis also he is Love. He whose Character is a Deceiver and Liar, is *Apol'yon* too; a Murderer and destroyer.

We all wish for Peace, and say we prize it, we complain that Earth is almost an Hell for want of it, that Fury, Passion, Violence, are the same in the Rational World, as Storms and Tempests in the Natural; and we profess we are ready and willing to do our utmost to allay these by Kindness, Love, Clemency; but when the matter comes to the Test, our Actions speak we are of another mind, we insist then on high terms as render all Union and Accommodation impossible; we are Peremptory and Inflexible in our Notions, and exact the utmost of our Brethren, without allowance or abatement; and as Victorious and Successful Princes, will not refuse Peace, yet not accept of it neither; on any other conditions than our selves propose. Thus the means of composing our Breaches, have rent them the wider, and whilst the Foundation is laid too narrow and scanty for that vast Superstructure 'tis to support, it cannot be expected to be with any other success.

We are not Originally disaffected to one another, the state of Nature before mans Apostacy was peaceable, the dissension of Brethren was the Effect of Mans Prevarication and Defection from God; and is it not reasonably to be expected, that the nearer approaches we make to our Primitive Integrity, the more that Benign and Loving Temper and Spirit should revive and flourish among us, which preserved Paradise it self from a Chaos and Confusion.

Our Dissentions cast a dishonour on the Head of our Recovery, as if he could not accomplish the Design of his Undertaking, and restore and create Man a-new to that Love and Friendship which was Natural to him before he revolted from his Innocence and Allegiance to his Creator.

Christian Charity is the true Panacea or All-heal, I mean not that selfish Charity which behaves it self so unseemly, as to begin at home and end there too, or else steps out of doors only to its own or Neighbouring Party, and Limits and Contracts its Beams to a single Point; but that diffusive and extensive Grace, which is of an Universal Latitude and Comprehension, that takes a large Sphere, for Action and Motion; this is the great Security and common Preservative of the Peace of Mankind, and without it no Guaranty can prevent Infractions and Breaches being made upon it: Than this the Apostle could not shew a more excellent way; and if this be not ground firm enough to cast Anchor on to preserve us from that Shipwreck with which we are threatened from our present Unchristian Storms; I pray God direct those whom it most concerns, to that which may be so.

